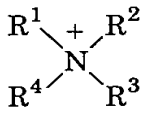
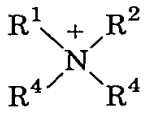
CLAIMS

1. A softener composition comprising the following components (A) and (B):

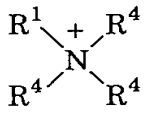
(A): a cationic surfactant comprising at least one selected from the group consisting of quaternary ammonium salts represented by the formulae (I), (II) or (III), wherein the ratio of the quaternary ammonium salt represented by the formula (I) to the total amount of the quaternary ammonium salts represented by the formulae (I), (II) and (III) exceeds 50 weight % and the ratio of (III) to the sum total of (I), (II) and (III) is not more than 10 %:



(I)



(II)



(III)

wherein R^1, R^2 and R^3 represent a long-chain alkyl or alkenyl group having the total carbon atoms of 8 to 40, which are the same as or different from one another and may be intersected by an ether group, an ester group or an amide group; R^4 represents an alkyl group, an alkenyl group or a hydroxy alkyl group, having 1 to 6 carbon atoms, plural R^4's being the same as or different

from one another; and X^- represents an anionic group,

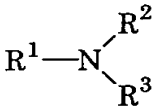
(B): a nonionic surfactant that is a compound represented by the following formula (IV):

$$R^5COO-(AO)m-R^6 \quad (IV)$$

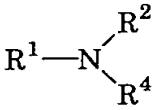
wherein, R^5 represents an alkyl or alkenyl group having the total carbon atoms of 7 to 29, R^6 represents an alkyl or alkenyl group having 1 to 6 carbon atoms, A represents an alkylene group having 2 to 4 carbon atoms and m is a number of 1 to 40 on the average value and plural A's may be the same as or different from one another.

2. A softener composition comprising the following components (A') and (B'):

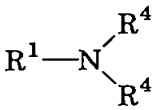
(A'): a cationic surfactant comprising at least one selected from the group consisting of quaternary ammonium salts represented by the formulae (I), (II) or (III) as defined in claim 1 and at least one selected from the group consisting of amines or salts thereof represented by the following formulae (V), (VI) or (VII), where the ratio of the total mole number of the quaternary ammonium salts to the total molar number of amines or the salts thereof is 99.9:0.1 to 70:30 and the ratio of the quaternary ammonium salts represented by the formula (I) to the total amount of the quaternary ammonium salts represented by the formulae (I), (II) and (III) exceeds 50 weight % and the ratio of (III) to the sum total of (I), (II) and (III) is not more than 10 %:



(V)

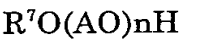


(VI)

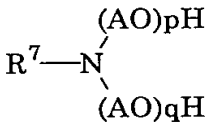


(VII)

(wherein R^1, R^2, R^3 and R^4 are the same as described above), (B'): at least one nonionic surfactant selected from the group consisting of compounds represented by the formula (IV) as defined in Claim 1 and the following formulae (VIII) or (IX):



(VIII)



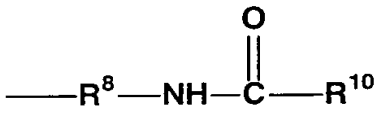
(IX)

wherein, R^7 represents an alkyl group, an alkenyl group or an acyl group, having carbon atoms of 8 to 22, A represents an alkylene group having 2 to 4 carbon atoms, n represents a number of 4 to 100 on the average value, p and q are a number of 1 to 50 on the average value, being the same as or different from each other, and plural A's may be the same as or different from one another.

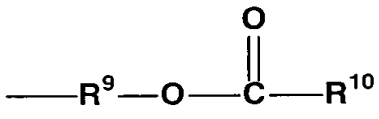
3. The softener composition according to claim 2, wherein the ratio of the total mole number of the quaternary ammonium salts

represented by the formulae (I), (II) and (III) to the total mole number of the amine salts represented by the formulae (V), (VI) and (VII) is 99:1 to 80:20.

4. The softener composition according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein R^1, R^2 and R^3 are the same as or different from one another and are groups represented by the following formula (X) or (XI):



(X)



(XI)

wherein R^8 and R^9 are the same as or different from each other and represent an alkylene group having 2 to 6 carbon atoms and $R^{10}CO$ represents a residual group resulting from a fatty acid having 8 to 30 carbon atoms from which a hydroxyl group has been excluded.

5. The softener composition according to any one of claims 1, 3 and 4, wherein said surfactant that is a compound represented by the formula (IV) has an HLB of 9 to 17.

6. The softener composition according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the blending ratio of the component (A) to the component (B) or the component (A') to the component (B') is

(A)/(B) or (A')/(B') by weight of 50/1 to 1/2.

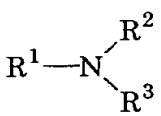
7. The softener composition according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the blending ratio of the component (A) or (A') to the composition is 3 to 50 weight %.

8. A method of preparing the softener composition described in any one of claims 1 to 7, comprising, first, preparing a composition having the total amount of the component (A) and the component (B) or the component (A') and the component (B') of not less than 70 weight % and mixing it with water.

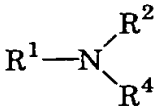
9. A method of preparing quaternary ammonium salts represented by the following formula (I), (II) or (III), reacting a tertiary amine represented by the following formula (V), (VI) or (VII) with a quaternizing agent to prepare quaternary ammonium salts in at least one aprotic solvent selected from the group consisting of ketone compounds, hydrocarbon compounds, heterocyclic compounds and compounds represented by the following formula (XII):

$R^{11}O\text{-}(AO)n\text{-}R^{12}$ (XII)

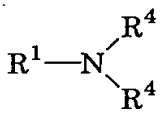
wherein, R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4 and X are the same as described above,



(V)



(VI)



(VII)

(wherein R^1, R^2, R^3 and R^4 are the same as described above), (XII)

wherein R^{11} and R^{12}, which are the same as or different from each other, represent an alkyl group, an alkenyl group or an acyl groups, each having 1 to 30 carbon atoms, A represents an alkylene group having 2 to 4 carbon atoms, n represents a number of 1 to 40 in the average value and n A's may be the same as or different from one another.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein said aprotic solvent is a compound represented by the formula (XII).

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein said compound represented by the formula (XII) is a compound represented by the formula (IV):

$R^6COO\text{-}(AO)n\text{-}R^7$ (IV)

wherein R^6, R^7, A and n are defined as the same as described above.